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**Murdoch University**

**Janean Robinson**

**I want to be heard! Classroom echoes of resistance**

**Abstract**

Vignette – “a painting, drawing or photograph that has no border but is gradually faded into its background at the edges.” (Encarta Dictionary)

In this paper I use youth vignettes to provide a forum for marginalised voices capturing their cultural identity and experiences in the context of their schooling and family lives. These pictures are exposed to contrast against the rhetoric surrounding The Behaviour Management in Schools Policy (2001) which “requires schools to develop a learning environment that is welcoming, supportive and safe” (3). The ‘environment’ these students reveal is one in which they are expected to ‘perform’, not as the creative, expressive, engaging actor in drama, often embraced and encouraged, but as the docile, compliant unit. Student resistance to dominant discourses is thus “provoked, driven underground, where it becomes a subterranean source of acting out” (Shor 1992, p. 24). It is the intention of this paper that these vignettes have no borders; the student voices instead reveal the often hidden interpretations, understandings and responses and gradually fade into the background of the policy to ‘speak its truth’ from the edges of its own policy deafness.

**Introduction:**

When re-analysing my research collected from 30 Year 10 secondary school students that I interviewed at a large secondary high school, I was searching for a common thread or theme by which to organise the slabs of transcribed text. Taking the theme of this conference, “engaging place(s), engaging culture(s)”, I focused on finding students’ hidden voices with the purpose of engaging their cultural experience of the school with the spaces provided in this conference forum. Ones’ choices of words-the quotes and images we use, what we extract, what we leave out, what we explore-all have something to say about who we are and what assumptions we take to our research and audience. Initially, I had considered that my data could be shaped into portraits under headings such as ‘identity’ and ‘alienation’. However, I then had trouble deciding what was fair to eliminate without being disloyal to students’ voices.

I considered (re)searching the powerful meaning that could be presented in vignettes that demonstrated the many growing contradictions that were clearly appearing and continually expressed between the *Behaviour Management in Schools Policy* (1998, 2001, 2008) and what students' voices were saying. Vignettes of resistance became the overarching common theme. This theme is pedagogically considered, rejecting schools as simply sites of instruction, but rather as political sites in which the culture can be one to struggle over and contest (Giroux, 1983, p. 111). By capturing the lived experiences of students, elements of resistance thus can be understood as the focal point for the construction of different interpretations.

### **The case study**

The case study for this research is a State Government Secondary Senior High School, located 50 kilometres on a coastal strip from the centre of a city in Western Australia. There are over 1000 students attending this school each day and it has 120 staff. The school opened in 1978 when the area was on the outskirts of the city, however with urban sprawl, has grown to become a large suburb with affordable housing for many low income families. It interfaces a large traditional industrial area and a naval base. The school's motto is "school of work place learning, learning excellence, equity and care". I chose to interview year 10 students (average age of 16 years) as it is the last relatively homogeneous school year before students become separated into specialist areas of study. It is also the age group in which many of the conflicts and contradictions between the behaviour policy and the students' interpretations become most critical. To protect the privacy of all students, the school and teachers in this discussion, the names used throughout are pseudonyms. For this reason, for the remainder of this paper, the case study school will be named 'Anchorage Senior High School' [ASHS]. The Department of Education and Training of Western Australia, is in charge of 86 similar secondary schools throughout the state.

### **Student resistance**

This paper will be organised around the theme of student resistance to the *Behaviour Management in Schools Policy* (1998, 2001, 2008) using vignettes to reveal students own interpretations, understandings and experiences. I use a theoretical frame of student resistance as being concerned with the relationship between school and society (Giroux, 1983, p. 107) and therefore the understanding of students resistance

is viewed as “an appeal to something felt to be potent and objectionable” (Connell, 1982, 88). Giroux (2003, xxii) argues for resistance to become part of a public pedagogy working to “position rigorous theoretical work and public bodies against corporate power” and the “militarization of visual and public space”. It is the intention of this paper, in representing student voices, to “be the catalyst for viable emancipation ... and lead to institutional reforms, to the redesign of education programs and to more humane pedagogic practice” (Preston and Symes, 1992, p. 43). ‘Gary’, one of the Year 10 students explains:

*If only they did not make such a big deal, I would probably be able to do what they want but they wear me down, make such a big deal that it is easier if I just don’t do what they want... at least then I can be a winner some how.*

‘Gary’ demonstrates this resistance is often generated by the interaction with the authority structure. Many of the stories I collected whilst interviewing students, in conversation with one or two of their peers, revealed their frustrations. Many experienced that they were subjected to codes and rules which seemed futile, pointless and out of touch with their own lives. By sharing these stories, however, the students began to realise that they were not alone, and actually were being objectified. Tait (2000, p. 11) confirms that when differentiating students in this manner they become normalised and thus a manageable population. However, this organising of students to be neat, tidy, compliant and silent actually blankets the harmful practices, the lack of choice and the marginalisation of many (Brannock 2000, 39). The cultural politics of the school has a powerful effect on how these students make sense of their schooling, “the spaces that exist for them to be listened to and how they work to shape schools as places” (Smyth, 1998, p. 7). The conversation between ‘Gary’ and ‘Eli’ demonstrates students shaping their school:

*Gary – It is such a waste of time. I don’t know how they think we are learning when we just copy out of a book.*

*Eli – we are doing stuff we learnt in Yr 8. I have my old worksheets from then, so I just copy them. It is boring.*

Gary – *some people get sent out for just asking questions. She expects us to behave when she sits us next to people that we don't like. If I go and sit next to my friend, she yells at me, yet she places people together who stuff up.*

Eli – *then we get entertainment out of her. She has big frizzy hair, and we stick stuff in it.*

Gary – *she deserves it.*

Eli – *the best thing is she is trying to get us bunsen burners.*

Gary – *with our class, that is not the smartest idea.*

Eli – *yeah, like in year 8, I burnt things. Like my paper. 'Cause you just sit there holding this test tube over a flame and it gets boring. So you stick other things in the flame to get more fun out of it.*

The more these techniques of power were exercised upon the students in disciplining and training, the more students resisted and the less they engaged in learning. This discipline is identified by Foucault (1997, p. 215) as a type of power comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures and levels of application. Teachers' roles have become more accountable and bureaucratic from such policies. This often results in filling the day with mindless, boring activities as one attends to the administration of time keeping, uniform code compliance, confiscation of I-pods, and the monitoring of mobile phones. Teachers too are caught up with techniques of surveillance having less energy remaining to motivate students.

### **The Behaviour Management in Schools Policy**

This policy was initially a strategy, *Making the Difference* (1998) evolving from *Students at Educational Risk* (1998) strategy of the Plan for Government School Education 1998-2000. It then developed into a *Behaviour Management and Discipline* strategy (BMaD) until 2001 when it became mandated policy in all government schools. The most recent version, 2008, includes principles, procedures and documentation for bullying, violence, breaches of school discipline and suspension of students from school. *The Behaviour Management in Schools Policy* (2008, 5) 'code of conduct' is described as:

... the school community's expectations of student behaviour and management procedures to implement the code. The school council assists with the formulation

of the code of conduct, including specific behavioural consequences and serious breaches of discipline that adversely affect or threaten safety. The school dress code does not form part of the code of conduct.

Each government school is required to use the mandated policy as a basis for its own school behaviour management plan. A subsection of this plan is to develop the schools own 'code of conduct'. Herein lays one of the many contradictions of policy in practice. When viewing this code of conduct at the individual school level, it can become very punitive and directive, as demonstrated by Anchorage Senior High School:

- Come to school;
- practice good personal cleanliness and hygiene;
- obey school rules...obeying fair and equitable instructions of teaching staff and;
- represent your school with pride and exhibit excellent behaviour.

A second complication and much conflict arises with the *Good Standing Policy* which forms the working document that secondary schools such as ASHS often link to their own Behaviour Management Plan. This *Good Standing Policy* is in turn linked it to the *School Uniform Policy* endorsed by the Department of Education and Training in 2007. An example of how this operates is extracted from a section of ASHS's *Good Standing Policy* (2007, p. 2):

Loss of good standing indicators are, 3 unexplained absences or 3 negative behaviour records in any two week period including out of uniform, failure to complete assessments, mobile phones out in class...

At the site of this research, the *Good Standing Policy* "rewards exemplary behaviour, attendance and work ethic". It also demonstrates a "hierarchical set of responses for consistently positive or negative behaviours" (ASHS *Behaviour Management Plan*, 1). The Student Services department of the school have administration staff whose main role is to contact staff, parents, administration and central offices of students

‘Good Standing’ status. Students can be ‘in’ or ‘out’ of Good Standing. Status is a binary of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ and accompanied by rewards or punishment determined by individual teachers and other staff of how students conduct themselves around and in the school, especially with regards to compliance to prescribed attire, time schedules and attendance. “Students who continue to fail to meet their expectations are case managed” (ASHS *Good Standing Policy* 2007, p. 1) and if they retain their Good Standing “they are eligible for the reward of excursion/incursions/carnivals/balls and dinners” (2).

### **It just isn’t fair**

Students that I interviewed at Anchorage Senior High School were often frustrated by the procedures set up for Good Standing. They were asked to carry around pink, yellow or blue slips for teachers to endorse at each lesson and for parents to validate at the end of each day. Students felt that many of the rules as well as their implementation ‘were not fair’.

*Con – sometimes you need rules*

*Taz – but not for every single thing. There is basically a rule for every little thing, like me and my friend Es, play basketball on the courts and if we are not in uniform we are not allowed to play*

*Con – and if you don’t bring your own ball, you are not allowed on the oval.*

*Taz – that means you can’t just go onto the oval, you have to play only sport. Me and my friend Es, we wanted to train for the coming lightening carnival, as we are in the basketball team, but she was wearing black shorts and not blue and the teacher said she could not go on. Then we explained about training for the carnival, but they said they did not care. So we do nothing, just walk around the school.*

Students often experienced many of the rules to be punitive, time wasting and demeaning. A section extracted from a pro forma letter to parents from ASHS regarding loss of Good Standing, highlights this pedantic practice:

Students who lose their Good Standing are required to complete a behaviour report card. This card will require a signature from every teacher each day for a week as well as having a parent signature each evening. Should [name] fail to complete this within the week, additional time will be added to [name] loss of Good Standing.

(5)

These practices are then lived out and interpreted by the students as futile as illustrated below:

Jan – *what is a behaviour card?*

Brad – *it is this card that you have to get all the teachers to sign to say how you have been.*

Jan – *have you ever had one?*

Jenny – *once for uniform and once for being away. My mum got text messaged and I was away for about a week. My mum texted back but I still lost my Good Standing. I had to get this special note and then my mum had to sign it so that I could get my Good Standing back*

Me – *how does that feel?*

Brad – *depressing. I remember when we were in primary school, we couldn't wait to come here, (to Anchorage Senior High), then when we did come here, it was like, 'no take me back', where the rules weren't so harsh. Then we would want to be good kids. Here there are too many rules that are stupid and the teacher then tries to get you into trouble.*

Sometimes by silencing these student voices resulted either in subversive or deviant practices or the students gave up, feeling obliged to comply and get through without expressing their real learning potential. Worst of all, sometimes they just 'dropped out', drifting off and becoming excluded (Smyth and Hattam, 2004). Consider 'Beth's' experience:

Jan – *have you had a behaviour card?*

Beth – *I have had heaps of them, so it's like I don't care any more. I try to be good but the teachers don't seem to care. It is so annoying. I try but they don't accept it.*



*Like normally I don't do my work, but now I am trying, but like yesterday I got kicked out for saying that I had an itchy eye and then I got sent to upper school for the whole day (and that was only 2<sup>nd</sup> period). Teachers just piss me off, like I do try and they don't accept it, it is hard for me, like I have been like that since year 4.*

Fromm (1968, 21) warns one outcome of the “shattering of hope” is a “hardening of the heart”. Some students, when it has been too hard for too long, decide that they will be better off not feeling anything, so that no-one can hurt them. When spaces in the classroom become restricted, some students such as ‘Gary’ would rather rebel:

*If they were not so strict on it, most people would probably wear it. It is just rebellion. Most people want to be rebellious. It's like you want us to do one thing, but we are going to do the opposite. If they weren't so strict on it, I would probably buy the uniform. But I choose not to, to annoy them!*

Smyth (2000, 2) believes that; “what gets said and what gets listened to are always understood to be marked by unequal power relations. Being sensitive to power involves responsiveness to passivity, silence, rebelliousness and alienation.” The Government of Western Australia, Department of Education and Training, *Behaviour Management in Schools Policy* (2001, 3), “requires schools to develop a learning environment that is welcoming, supportive and safe.” However, whilst the values and approaches that evolve from this policy remain based on standards, management, control, enforcing rules that reward some behaviour and sanction others, then many students will experience this statement as inauthentic. Instead, students are more likely to become de-motivated, have a limited sense of self achievement, have less shared knowledge and be less likely to take risks that help them develop new ways of learning and thinking. Ironically, such policies “often exacerbate student disengagement and alienation” (Smyth 2000, p. 229).

Nik – *I reckon rules are stupid, because no-one follows them anyway, because they are so silly. Like not swearing in class, it does not make sense, as people swear anyway.*

Ed – *if you make rules, they are going to get broken.*

Nik – *so there is no point – like that uniform rule. Not eating in class, having to always ask to go to the toilet.*

Ed– *and get your diary signed.*

Nik– *you have to have the diary on you or walk all the way back to get it.*

What is often demonstrated throughout these interviews is how student behaviour management policy shifts the focus of attention from the school itself to the students and their families. Thomson (1999) explains that this works by “codifying student’s behaviour and making it an individual problem by describing them as single ‘critical incidents’ rather than requiring an explanation of context or any ongoing pattern of events” (11). For re-entry to school after suspension, for example, a plan is required which only focuses on how the student needs to change. There is also no place in any of the text for parents or students to record their version of events (Thomson 1999, p. 12). This practice “renders invisible the micro-politics of school life, making the school and the system ‘blind’ as to how many students are belittled, marginalised, ignored and ‘othered’” (12). Sometimes students may be reacting against schoolwork that does not challenge them or is uncreative and leads to further disengagement. Instead of laying all the blame on the individual student, what should be examined is just how ‘engaged’ and motivated the students are.

### **We are bored**

Many students indicated in their interviews, that they found the curriculum presented to them repetitive and unimaginative.

Jack – *Some teachers do not even want to be here, like our last teacher will just give you work, write a lot of stuff on the board and then just gives us a textbooks.*

Beth – *yeah, then it is “just write this down”, then he will go to this page, write the questions down, these numbers, and then he just goes out of the room for about 30 minutes*

Pedagogically, the curriculum was often delivered in a very dull, un-explorative manner; notes copied off the board or given as a text book exercise or worksheets to fill out. Often, it did not relate to their own needs or interests and consequently there

was no opportunity to engage with the teacher or with others in their learning. Students felt they were being ‘spoon-fed’ information for a test or to please the teacher that something had been done.

*Stu – you can’t learn if you are doing it from a book. You need someone to talk to you.*

*Shane – like in class, she will put a projector on, and then we have to just copy it down quickly, before she changes to the next sheet, we are just writing and copying words, we are not taking anything in and she is not explaining it to us.*

*Stu – then she talks while we are writing! What is the point in doing that?*

Connell (1994, p. 137) notes that particularly for students in disadvantaged schools, traditional subject content, texts and teaching methods together with standardised testing “turn out to be sources of systematic difficulty” and by enforcing these practices “heightens the problem of discipline”. The curriculum was seldom relational or contextual to the students that I interviewed. These bored kids often then presented a problem to the classroom, as no longer could they sit still or be docile. In short, they resisted. As Shor (1992, p. 24) states, student resistance to dominant discourses is thus “provoked, driven underground, where it becomes a subterranean source of acting out”. Another common theme that arose from the student voices was that they felt that their version of a behavioural incident was often silenced.

### **They just don’t listen!**

*Shane – the only thing that is in common for all of us, is that the teachers just don’t listen.*

*Stu – then you shout at them, and you get into trouble for shouting, for them not listening!*

*Shane – then they shout at you, you feel really belittled, when you are sitting down and they hover over top of you, shouting....*

When students are not listened to in multiple and cumulative ways (MacLure, 2003, p. 177), then knowledge, expertise and identity are all implicated as expressed by ‘Max’:

Max – *some teacher's help you when they know things are happening at home and stuff, others don't take account of that at all. Like here they say, 'yeah', we have student services to help you, a counsellor but they don't notice it. They wait for your parents to call the school. Like last year I used to go off at my teachers and that because my Mum was trying to kill herself. It happened 3 times. My parents were splitting up as well. I didn't know what was happening and I used to take it out on my teachers at school. No-one seemed to notice.*

Jan – *did you get a chance to talk to anyone about it?*

Max – *only when my Dad rang the school. They, (the teachers) did not seem to take it into account. I ended up getting into a fight with an old mate, 'Doug', because he brought my Mum into it. He got suspended again, and no one seemed to understand the reasons behind the fight. I tried to tell them about it, but they did not seem to be concerned. The only thing they were concerned about was getting me into trouble for what I did.*

Throughout these dialogues, the students demonstrate that their social and cultural lives are often represented as out of line with mainstream expectations of how one should be and what one should or should not do as a member of one's school. MacLure (2003,p. 177) takes the view that “children who do not get this kind of apprenticeship run the risk of not being ‘heard’ because their discourse habits do not fit the pattern that teachers are listening out for.” ‘Kai’ demonstrates how the student's version of events is often not taken into account and the consequences of this:

Kai – *if I was in S&E right now, that teacher and me just don't get along; if I was in there now, I probably would have lost it. Today I am not in the best of moods, cause last night my mum kicked me out and I am living with my Dad at the moment. So today if the teacher just niggled, I would lose it.*

Giroux (1983, 108-109) claims that “central to analysing any act of resistance would be a concern with uncovering the degree to which it speaks to a form of refusal that highlights, either implicitly or explicitly the need to struggle against the social nexus of domination and submission.” Analysing and interrogating what is going on with

these student acts of resistance uncovers the form of refusal to comply with the codes of conduct that are really codes of confusion and often ridiculous codes of conformity that speak more about the displacement of power. These inauthentic school codes of conduct can for example, lead to conforming for the sake of being able to regain some power. The students explain:

Jan – *do you have any end of year functions as a year group?*

Gary & Eli – *the river cruise. It is in 4<sup>th</sup> term.*

Eli – *I don't want to go*

Gary – *I want to go, but it will mean that I have to buy a uniform. That is the only thing that I have lost my Good Standing for, is uniform. But for 4<sup>th</sup> term, I am going to buy the uniform so I can go. That is the only time I will wear uniform.*

According to Rose (1990, p. 240) , “in compelling, persuading and inciting subjects to disclose themselves, finer and more intimate regions of personal and interpersonal life come under surveillance and are opened up for expert judgement, and normative evaluation, for classification and correction.” The sad ending to the story of ‘Gary’ is that he never did get to this anticipated end of year function. By the time I came to interview him in the second session in July, one month after this transcript was recorded and only half way the school year, he had already left. This is a confronting yet typical story of those students who struggle to regain dignity and some power, yet get worn down and eventually the pressure upon the individual becomes too much to bear.

### **They wear me down**

This is not a new phenomenon, as articulated by Dewey (1916, p. 141) almost one century ago when he claimed that the “chief source of the ‘problem of discipline’ in schools” lies with the compulsion of the teacher having to spend significant time in suppressing the bodily activities of students. This distracts from real teaching because “a premium is put on physical quietude; on silence, on rigid uniformity of posture and movement; upon a machine-like simulation of the attitudes of intelligent interest” (141). The teachers’ main pre-occupation, thus turns to punish any of the resulting deviations likely to occur (141). A ‘mainstream classroom’ is often constructed as something that is the ideal; perfect, happy, eager faces enthusiastic to learn. However,

what is often the reality is a classroom with rows of isolated seats, boring curriculum and emphasis on uniformity, punctuality, neatness, silence and conformity. The bodies are to be controlled and the intention is that they become docile. Foucault (1977, p.136) defines a docile body as one that can be “subjected, used, transformed and improved”. I argue that the behaviour management plan, especially the code of conduct, is socially conditioning students’ identities and training them to be identified by their bodies, their use of space and time. In the words of Foucault (1977, p.138):

... discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). In short, it dissociates power from the body; on the one hand, it turns it into an ‘aptitude’ a ‘capacity’ which it seeks to increase; on the other hand, it reverses the course of the energy, the power that might result from it, and turns it into a relation of strict subjection.

Complications and clashes occur with the Good Standing Policy between administrators of the policy and the students as sometimes record keeping may be shoddy, some rules misinterpreted or used in subversive ways. Negative behaviour of course, can be interpreted in many ways. ‘Out of uniform’ could range from it being the wrong colour to having a stripe too wide, a logo too big or a skirt a centimetre too short. Assessment appears to depend not only on administrator of rule but also the subject and the student’s relationship with the teacher or manager and their reputation within the school community. ‘Mobile phone being on in classes’ was also a rule that was okay for some and not for others. Some teachers used their mobile phones during class time. These types of incidents highlight the types of persistent struggles that occur in school where policy and subsequent rules are not able to keep up with the culture of the students and in line with their everyday social lives. Schools acting in this way constantly praise the virtues of mature adult behaviour yet at the same time they continually deny students ways of expressing such behaviour (Hawkins 1982, p.24). An interesting example of this irony is exposed in the following vignette:

*Ed – he had a big problem with controlling us. He would send most of us outside while he was interviewing kids for their report. We were just talking to each other and running around, because we were bored. He came outside, told us off, so we*

*turned it down a little bit. Then the day after he got complaints from other teachers, saying “what is wrong with your class, can’t you control them?” So I can see in some ways it would have been a little embarrassing for him. But instead of having a harsh talk, which he did anyway, he got out a tape recorder, saying he would not tell us when exactly, but if we started to be disruptive, he would start taping us.*

*Tara – and then start showing our parents.*

*Ed – and he always has his mobile on him, so he said he could start contacting our parents straight away...*

By taking a deeper insight into the social, political and cultural events occurring in institutions such as schools which is based on relation, is reflective and more morally sensitive to the young people in them, it may be possible to reconstruct the discourse of behaviour management and begin to open other dignified spaces and responses (Purpel & Shapiro 1995, p.194).

### **Recognising other spaces**

Giroux (2003, xxii) proposes that educators “connect classrooms to the challenges faced by social movements in the streets.” Resistance in this way, instead of being harmful can provide spaces “to be transformed into public considerations and struggles” and are “hopeful” (Preston & Symes 1992, p.43).

*Brad – yeah, sport is a good subject. Every Thursday I get to go surfing and body boarding. I get to be out and about walking around the bush. There are not too many rules so it is a lot of fun. The teacher gets into the water and has fun too.*

Throughout this paper, I have analysed students’ acts of resistance against the school’s codes of conduct. The students’ voices show that they are struggling to understand the authenticity of many of these rules and regulations. The rhetoric of the policy is couched in statements of care and concern, whereas in reality, the codes of conduct into which they translate become pedantic, punitive rules of conformity and compliance. Stevenson and Ellsworth (1993, p.266) agree that when such rules have the “potential for exacerbating the problem or creating additional problems,” then such rules and their application need re-examining. The students’ voices confirm this:

Gary – *It happened 3 weeks ago in science. I refused to take my jumper off. The teacher kept telling me to take it off and I had a cold at the time so I didn't want to take it off.*

Jan – *why did they want you to take it off?*

Gary – *cause it wasn't uniform. The teacher is not very nice.*

Eli – *half of us don't wear uniform. So what is the point of pushing it?*

Gary – *so I got kicked out of class and given a detention notice. I couldn't go because I had work and my Mum didn't realize I had work, so said okay to going to detention.*

These students reveal their inner voices when invited to talk about their experiences, yet often they cannot use these inner voices within school (Nagle 2001, p.113). Resistance often eventuates in either silence or rebellion developing an autonomous culture against the alien “domination of rationalized capital” (Wexler 1983, p.136). When students own interpretations, understandings and experiences are invited and really ‘listened to’, what can be heard instead is a call for relationship, care and respect:

Kylie - *When I was in Year 8 and new to this area, I just shut down. Sure I was learning about myself and other people but I felt out of place because there were just so many people that I did not know. Ms 'B' saw that and she helped develop me into a better person. She actually cared and she was there if any of us needed someone to talk to. She is just so human; she cradles you through high school. She is like a best mate as well as a teacher. She has the respect of almost the whole school because she is human and she knows that there is a time to work, but also a time to joke and have a laugh.*

Daniel - *Some teachers let you talk and listen to music yet we still do our work. We respect them by doing our work because they respect us.*

## **Conclusion**

In this paper I have woven students' stories together with theory to speak back to the deafness of the *Behaviour Management in Schools Policy*. I have highlighted the



many contradictions that emerge between what first appears (and is packaged) as a caring policy and what eventuates into conflicting issues over which students and teachers struggle. When subjects, texts, teaching and assessment methods become too conventional and systemically difficult to follow, they often result in boredom to the extent that enforcing these methods heightens the problem of discipline (Connell, 1994, p.137). When students' interpretations, understandings and experiences of behaviour management are not listened to, their versions are silenced or driven underground. It is time to ask the question if this policy is benefiting and attending to the complex needs of students in schools in which they spend a majority of their time. If schools are no longer learning communities but rather institutions of social control in which structural inequalities become legitimised (Weis & Fine 2001, 497), then these vignettes have a potent and clear message about student resistance in schools. The power of such student resistance lies in a reconsideration of pedagogic spaces that engage with these young peoples' cultural places allowing resistance to be transformative and hopeful (Preston & Symes 1992, p.43). A rigorous political understanding of student resistance (Giroux 1983, p.107) means it can be understood not as failure, opposition, deviance or learned helplessness but instead a "great deal to do, though not exhaustively, with the logic of moral and political indignation." In the telling of these students' echoes of resistance from their own classrooms, we pursue the silences and in the process, confront moral, ethical and political dilemmas and responsibilities, face to face.

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